

families hurting, paying more at the pump, paying more to heat their homes.

Health care policy is the same story. I mean, how long has it been that this Congress has been listening to the cries, to the pleas of families and businesses throughout this Nation to do something about the rising cost of health care?

And for 12 years of this Republican Congress, for 8 years now, almost 8 years of this Bush presidency, no relief on health care costs. While yet, at the same time, those that are making profits off the health care system, the insurance companies, the drug companies, continue to make enormous profits. Salaries for the CEOs of these companies spiral to new heights.

So people are doing pretty well when it comes to energy prices, people are doing pretty well when it comes to health care prices. It's just not consumers. It's just not our neighbors and our friends and our relatives. It's that lucky few who got to run the oil company, who got to run the drug company, who got to run the insurance company.

And we're trying to change things. But we're finding that it isn't easy without partners. It isn't easy without a Republican minority who actually wants to actually do something to change our economy. It's not so easy without a President who wants to come to the table and help us with health care policy.

And so we are in difficult economic times today. But we need a Congress working together. We need a President who's willing to come to the table.

Mr. Speaker, the facts speak for themselves here. On January 22, 2001, when the President was sworn into office, the price of a gallon of gasoline was about \$1.47. Today, 7 years later that price stands at \$3.53. In Connecticut you might be lucky today to find a gallon of gasoline at \$3.53. I think when I filled up my car this weekend, if I remember, it was up around the \$3.70 mark.

This is what you get, this is what you get when you give away \$16 billion of tax breaks to the oil companies. This is what you get when you refuse to make any investments in the types of alternative renewable energy sources that could wean this country off of gasoline. And this is what you get when, year after year after year, you perpetuate a foreign policy that destabilizes international oil markets in the Middle East and elsewhere.

It's no secret, it's no surprise that we're standing where we are today. This Democratic majority has inherited an utterly bankrupt national energy policy, and it is leading to the trouble that we have seen in American families today.

And the same thing goes for health care policy, Mr. Speaker. Again, I find it painfully humorous that 10 percent increases in premiums are to be celebrated around this country in our busi-

ness community. And what it has led to is too many businesses who want to do the right thing, who want to give health care to their employees, cutting them off, or forcing more of the cost on those employees; putting yet another economic burden on families all around this country.

This economic slowdown, once again, is not just about the subprime crisis. It's also about energy prices, it's also about health care costs. And for 12 years of this Congress, for 7 years of this presidency, no action on health care.

With one minor exception, right? You remember the 2003 Medicare Modernization Act. Well, it did a couple of things. First, it foisted a Medicare prescription drug benefit seniors, which drove millions of seniors around this country through the roof trying to figure out, amongst 40 or 60 or 80 different plans, which one they should sign up for; drove them through the roof even more once they got to the end of the year and realized that their coverage was going to run out on them when they entered that dreaded donut hole; and all the while, made another nice health profit for the insurance companies and drug companies that were in the room writing the bill with the Republican majority at the time.

That was our approach to health care, was to give a little bit to people in an utterly confusing and cruel program, which gives a lot to the folks that didn't need any more. That's pretty much the sum total of health care reform in this Congress before the Democrats took control.

And as we've tried to extend out health care, we have been met with almost uniform resistance from the Republicans and from the President, most significantly in our effort to try to extend health care to poor kids. Four million kids we could have covered with the health care State insurance bill that we tried to pass. We came, you know, depending on anybody's estimates, about six votes short here in the House of Representatives, to overturn the President's repeated vetoes.

That kind of health care coverage, reaching out and extending to a lot of working families out there. Remember, you're talking about $\frac{3}{4}$, maybe more of the 46 million uninsured out there are members of families in which you have a full-time worker. People are playing by the rules. They're doing everything we ask them to do, trying to make do in a tough economy, and yet they don't have any health care insurance. And that children's health care insurance bill that we tried to pass here as Democrats, and couldn't get cooperation from our friends across the aisle, that would have extended out benefits to four million more kids and, more importantly, four million more families, families that are doing everything we ask, playing by the rules, trying to survive and simply can't get health care to their kids.

Now, we know that they do get health care to their kids, because if

their child is sick, they might postpone getting them to the doctor, but compassionate parents all across this country will end up bringing their child down to the emergency room, will end up finding a doctor that will treat them. But they pay for all of that out of their pocket.

More bankruptcies in this country are caused by health care costs than any other cause that you can dream up. And so this economic slowdown is exacerbated by the increasing amount of health care costs that are pushed and burdened on families across this country.

Doing something about health care is doing something about the economy, just like doing something about energy prices is also about doing something for this economy.

But the other thing that I'm finding out, Mr. Speaker, as I'm walking around talking to constituents in the northwest section of Connecticut, is that the gig is up on the Republican and the President's ability to separate the war from the economy, because people are figuring out that they are totally linked together.

The fact that we are spending \$339 million a day, let me say that again, \$339 million a day on this war is taking food right out of the mouths of families here in this country, taking jobs effectively right out of the hands of American families.

Why is that? Imagine what we could have done if we could have taken the nearly \$1 trillion that we have spent on this war over the past 5 years, and invested it in growing new economies in this country, invested it in building new worker training programs so that individuals being phased out of old economy jobs could be transitioned into new economy jobs.

What if we took that money that we've been spending, \$330 million a day, and put that into new tax incentives for small businesses to grow their operations?

All of the things that we could have done with that money could have prevented the economic slowdown that we face today. They are absolutely linked together, the spending on this war, and the economic slowdown that we see today.

And part of this whole puzzle, and now you're getting into sort of high-minded economics that a non economist like me probably shouldn't be talking about. But we know also that the dollar is falling fast across this world, and is jeopardizing even further the soundness of our economy as our dollar gets weaker and weaker and weaker.

And part of that equation is the fact that every dollar of this war, virtually every dollar for this war has been borrowed from foreign countries, countries that we're trying to sit across the table from and negotiate better trade deals, trying to negotiate on foreign policy. We can't do that on a fair and level playing field because we owe them